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### **School feeding the hi-tech, low-water way**

(Johannesburg, 11 October 2018) School food gardens got a hi-tech twist today in Soweto with the launch of a new aquaponics facility near the Elias Motsoaledi Clinic in Orlando West on land donated by the City of Johannesburg. Local dignitaries and stakeholders were introduced to the facility, the second established in South Africa under the four-year, R37-million Health In Action programme funded by the Mondelēz International Foundation and facilitated by INMED Partnerships for Children (INMED) for Mondelēz South Africa. The first of the programme's aquaponics facilities was opened in Port Elizabeth in February 2017.

The commercial-sized, 225m<sup>2</sup> facility aims to produce up to two tons of various greens and about 1,9 tons of fresh water fish annually to supplement the nutritional needs of learners at nutritionally at-risk Soweto primary schools. The aquaponics growing method harnesses hi-tech cultivation techniques to produce up to 10 times the quantity of fish and fresh produce but uses between 80 and 90 percent less water than traditionally cultivated plots. Aquaponics combines fish farming (aqua-culture) with hydroponics, growing plants in enriched water rather than soil.

“This new aquaponics facility is an important means of further supporting and sustaining healthy lifestyle choices by offering better access to fresh, healthy and nutritious foods to children and families from at-risk communities,” says Swadheen Sharma, Managing Director of Mondelēz South Africa. “Better nutrition and health also enable children to learn better and so be better prepared to participate productively in the country's economy.”

Assisting low-income communities to make healthier food choices is a key pillar of the Health in Action programme, which was launched in South Africa in 2015. The programme reaches more than 100 000 primary-school learners in 116 schools. It supplements and extends government school feeding schemes by including playground activities, infotainment-based nutrition learning and school food gardens.

These activities, led by Health in Action Break Time Buddies, encourage children to learn and adopt messages about nutrition, physical activity and healthy lifestyles. The programme also provides training and education to adults, such as teachers, school food workers, food vendors, parents and other community members.

An interim survey of the impact of the Health in Action programme at five Gauteng schools and seven Eastern Cape schools showed that 10 percent of learners in 2016 were malnourished and wasted, with 2 percent severely wasted. By 2017, no learners involved in the programme were suffering from wasting. In 2016, 15 percent of learners reported that they ate no fruit and 17 percent reported eating no vegetables. These proportions fell to 2 percent and 5 percent respectively in 2017. Physical inactivity was reduced from 43 percent to 21 percent among learners from 2016 to 2017.

“It is encouraging to see a worthwhile project have such a practical and immediate impact on children and the broader community,” says Gauteng MMC for Health and Social Development Dr Mpho Phalatse. “This is a vital contribution to enabling them to reach their full personal and economic potential.” The initiative is a role-model for coping with the challenges of both climate and social upliftment.

In addition to improving access to nutritious food, the new aquaponics centre will offer a variety of training programmes for the community. “In a changing climate, and particularly in a water-poor country, aquaponics can play a major role in ensuring food supply as well as offering opportunities for economic development,” says Unathi Sihlahla, Health in Action Programme Director of INMED South Africa. “By providing training opportunities for the broader community on climate-smart agriculture, we can help our people develop the skills to overcome poverty.”

“We are delighted to introduce the potential of this economic opportunity to the people of Soweto and especially to contribute to our goal of putting healthier food choices within reach of low-income communities,” says Sharma.

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### **About Mondelēz South Africa**

Mondelēz South Africa is the largest confectionery business in South Africa, enjoying market leadership in the chocolate, chewing gum and bubble-gum categories. The company’s portfolio includes some of the largest snacking brands in the world, such as Cadbury Dairy Milk, Halls, Oreo and Stimorol gum. In addition, Mondelēz SA is the custodian of iconic and well-loved local brands such as Chappies bubble gum, Chomp, Lunch Bar and Dentyne chewing gum. The company has a presence in a number of countries in Southern, Central and Eastern Africa where it invests in growing these markets.

### **About INMED Partnerships for Children and INMED South Africa**

INMED Partnerships for Children is a nonprofit international development organization that has worked in more than 100 countries for over 30 years to create pathways for disadvantaged children and families to achieve well-being and self-reliance. Through multisector partnerships and in-country affiliates, INMED builds effective systems that deliver innovative and sustainable approaches to break complex cycles of poverty for current and future generations. Learn more at <https://inmed.org>.

Since 2006, in-country affiliate INMED South Africa has been working in collaboration with a wide range of corporate, foundation and government partners to transform the health, lives and futures of South Africa's most vulnerable children. INMED South Africa's programs focus on food security, child and community health, and economic and social development via climate-smart agriculture and participatory education. Incorporated under Section 21, INMED South Africa is a registered non-profit organization (NPC/PBO) recognized by the Department of Social Development and SARS. Learn more at <https://inmed.org.za>.

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